

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Shutter Mill, Inc. The

#### Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance

#### Sales Turn Around at Kirtz Shutters

##### Client Profile:

Kirtz Shutters, founded in 1987 as The Shutter Mill, began as a two-man operation, manufacturing two shutter panels a day. Kirtz now employs 52 people and is one of the leading producers of high-end plantation shutters. The company manufactures shutters in any size and shape using various types of wood. Kirtz is located in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

##### Situation:

Kirtz had suffered declining sales for years as it faced increased competition from foreign and domestic rivals. Owner Chris Tietz believed his company had the foundation in place to be a viable manufacturer, but needed help in developing a strategic direction for the business. He turned to the Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance (The Alliance), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for help.

##### Solution:

Joe Genet, a Manufacturing Extension Agent with the Alliance, worked with Kirtz to develop three strategic planning sessions. The workshops helped Kirtz articulate key decision-making filters and the strategic vision for the organization. This laid the groundwork for future growth and was followed with a competitive mapping session that helped explain what the company's competitors do and how they think. "The competitive mapping session helped Kirtz to see clearly their own unique strengths in comparison to their competitors," Genet said. A specific action plan soon developed around targeted and measurable growth initiatives. There is now a greater focus within the company and sales are growing. To broaden Kirtz's sales base, Genet is working through Oklahoma State University to help Kirtz develop a new product. The relationship with the Alliance continues with the implementation of Lean concepts and the analysis of plant layout focused on eradicating waste.

##### Results:

\* Increased sales by \$200,000.

##### Testimonial:

"The Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance has been vital to the ongoing improvements of our entire business. They help me focus on the big picture, providing ongoing counsel and direction, which I need and appreciate."

Chris Tietz, Owner